United Nations A/AC.109/2005/SR.1

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
4 May 2005

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 17 February 2005, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Ms. Fréchette (Deputy Secretary-General)
Chairman: Mr. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

Contents

Opening of the session by the Deputy Secretary-General

Adoption of the agenda

Election of officers

Organization of work

Other matters

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

05-24178 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Deputy Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chairman** said that the 2005 session of the Committee marked the midpoint of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. While the success of the decolonization process had had an enormous impact on the political shape of the world and the membership of the United Nations, that process remained unfinished. The Committee must explore ways to accelerate the decolonization of the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

2. The Plan of Action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism called on the United Nations, in cooperation with the administering Powers, to ensure that the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories were kept fully aware of the political status options available to them: free association, integration with another State or independence. Only in that way could they make educated choices about their future.

3. The mid-term review of the Second International Decade offered the Committee and the administering Powers an opportunity to revitalize dialogue and pursue an open, transparent and constructive exchange of views in order to formulate strategies for cooperation; step up efforts to inform the peoples of the Territories of their right to determine their own future freely, and of the options available to them in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and other documents; and work with the peoples of the Territories concerned to develop decolonization plans on a case-by-case basis, so as to implement United Nations decisions and complete the decolonization process. She hoped that the Committee would work with the administering Powers to make the most of those opportunities.

4. It was heartening that the 2005 session was opening just as one of the Pacific region Non-Self-Governing Territories, Tokelau, was preparing to decide on its future in an act of self-determination. Tokelau stood as an example of cooperation and of political will exercised by the representatives of its people and the administering Power, New Zealand. She wished the Committee every success in the year ahead.

Adoption of the agenda

5. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

6. *Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia) was elected Chairman, Mr. Okio (Republic of Congo) and Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) were elected Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

7. *Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia) took the Chair.*

8. **The Chairman** expressed the Committee's appreciation for the Deputy Secretary-General's statement and for her continued support for the cause of decolonization. He welcomed the delegations of Dominica and Timor-Leste. By becoming members of the Committee, both States had demonstrated the value of the Committee's work. Moreover, the Committee had played a direct role in Timor-Leste's struggle towards self-determination. The delegations of Guatemala, Namibia and Peru had indicated their wish to participate, as observers, in the opening meeting of the Committee.

9. In 2005, two important activities would focus attention on the decolonization process, showing how much it had progressed and how much remained to be done in the light of Articles 1, 55 and 73 of the United Nations Charter. The first was the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration, and the second was the five-year review of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Both activities illustrated the importance of the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly by Member States and by the United Nations system itself.

10. Successive resolutions had reaffirmed the Organization's wide decolonization mandate, but their implementation left much to be desired. In addition, the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had themselves made recommendations to the Committee, including urging it to engage other United Nations bodies in order to draw on their expertise. Furthermore, various Member States had expressed concern in the Fourth Committee at the lack of implementation of the Plan of Action's research and analysis activities, which

were intended to bridge the information gap regarding decolonization.

11. The responsibility of the Member States and the United Nations did not end with the adoption of resolutions on decolonization. Unless greater attention was paid to implementation, there would be a continuing spiral of inaction, and the Committee would begin its business each year without regard to whether the previous year's recommendations had been carried out. In addressing the issues of decolonization in the twenty-first century, the Committee must avoid maintaining the same systemic approach year after year, an approach which had yielded few concrete results in the decolonization of the remaining Territories. Instead, it must modernize its methods, through new and innovative measures, and put in place a sustainable approach to the attainment of a full measure of self-government for the remaining 16, mostly small island, Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2005/L.1 and A/AC.109/2005/L.2 and Corr.1)

12. **The Chairman** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/AC.109/2005/L.1, in which he drew the Committee's attention to the resolutions and decisions relevant to its work for the current year. The Committee also had before it for consideration document A/AC.109/2004/L.2 and Corr.1, which contained his suggestions regarding the organization of the work of the Committee and its programme of work and timetable. Every effort would be made to conclude the Committee's work, as scheduled, on 24 June 2005, so that the Committee's report could be made available to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. In that connection, 2004 had been the first year in which the Committee had issued its report as a single document rather than in separate instalments. He hoped that the Secretariat would try to do the same in 2005, in order to save resources.

13. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea), welcoming Dominica and Timor-Leste, said that their presence underscored the relevance of the Committee's work. As Chairman, he had urged the Committee to think innovatively, and some progress had been made, particularly regarding cooperation with the administering Powers. The Committee should now set priorities and divide the Non-Self-Governing Territories into clusters. Tokelau, Bermuda, American Samoa and the Cayman Islands could be included in the first cluster. Tokelau was firmly on the path to a final act of self-determination, largely thanks to the cooperation of New Zealand, its administering Power. The other three Territories could make similar progress by the end of the Second International Decade, but only with the full commitment of their populations, administering Powers, the Committee and other stakeholders. The Committee should rapidly dispatch visiting missions with a mandate that was not simply consultative, but also focused on fact-finding.

14. The second cluster should be composed of Territories which were not involved in sovereignty disputes, but whose populations did not yet feel ready to decide on self-determination. Once again, progress would depend on the commitment of their populations, administering Powers, the Committee and other stakeholders, who must work together innovatively. Account must also be taken of regional initiatives, such as that of the Pacific Islands Forum regarding New Caledonia. The third cluster would consist of Territories involved in sovereignty disputes. Consultations and the development of work programmes would take far longer in their case.

15. Decolonization had been described as irrelevant, anachronistic and belonging to a bygone era. However, the tasks set for the Second International Decade must be achieved and the Committee's mandate to eradicate colonialism must be fulfilled. The peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories must be empowered to take their own decisions. Decolonization remained one of the Organization's biggest achievements, as all of the Member States present at the meeting had been the direct beneficiaries of the Committee's dedication.

16. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) welcomed the delegations of Dominica and Timor-Leste and expressed the hope that the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would soon take their rightful places in the Organization. He was confident that Tokelau's status would be settled rapidly, thanks to the exemplary cooperation of New Zealand, and assured the people of Bermuda that the Committee would respect their choices.

17. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that there had been much talk about revitalization of the United Nations and the challenges that lay ahead, yet little had been said about decolonization. It had not been

mentioned in any of the experts' reports, which were supposedly intended to lead the Organization in the right direction. He hoped that that omission would be corrected and that the question would be dealt with in the comprehensive report on the Millennium Declaration, to be submitted by the Secretary-General in March 2005. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had put their trust in the Committee, and it must fulfil its commitments.

18. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) said that while Member States' attention had been focused on the reform of the Organization and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, decolonization had been overlooked. The Committee itself must remain vigilant, while working to ensure that the international community's attention did not flag with regard to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Second International Decade. He appealed to the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the Committee for the attainment of that objective.

19. **Mr. Xie** Yiuliang (China) said that his delegation welcomed the new members, Dominica and Timor-Leste, and pledged its full support for the work of the Committee.

20. **Mr. Jenie** (Indonesia), welcoming the new members, said that Timor-Leste and his country had a long history as immediate neighbours. Bilateral relations were progressing steadily, based on a spirit of looking forward and of reconciliation.

21. The Committee had less than six years to complete the tasks of the Second International Decade. Furthermore, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/136, the Committee must finalize before the end of 2005 a constructive programme of work for the Non-Self-Governing Territories to facilitate the implementation of the relevant resolutions on decolonization, including resolutions on specific Territories. The Committee should continue to conduct more dialogues with all relevant parties, including the administering Powers. Regional seminars provided a good opportunity for such dialogue.

22. The Non-Self-Governing Territories looked to the Committee to provide guidance with regard to their right to self-determination, including independence. Given its own historical experience of decolonization, Indonesia had always been fully committed to a comprehensive solution for the remaining Territories. Productive and continued cooperation with the administering Powers was of the utmost importance in the search for innovative and practical ways to reinvigorate the decolonization process.

23. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica) said that Dominica attached great importance to its admission as a member of the Committee and pledged its full support. He concurred with the Chairman's focus on the implementation of the resolutions regarding decolonization. All Member States must redouble their efforts to fulfil the goals of the Second International Decade within the remaining five years, and he called upon the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the Committee. His delegation hoped to assist Bermuda in evolving a more comprehensive perspective as it moved forward in its quest for self-determination. He expressed his delegation's solidarity with the other Non-Self-Governing Territories and its intent to contribute to fulfilment of their aspirations.

24. **Mr. Roqalaka** (Fiji) said that Fiji's place on the Committee was an acknowledgement that the aspirations of small island nations were not mere dreams. His delegation hoped that the Committee would find new ways to work towards realizing the aim of ending decolonization in its current form.

25. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) expressed his delegation's full support for the Committee and its work.

26. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia) stressed the importance of the Committee's programme of work; the Committee must work more quickly so as to meet the aspirations of the remaining Territories by the end of the Second International Decade. Tokelau was a very good example of what could be accomplished through the decolonization process; he praised Tokelau and the administering Power, New Zealand, for the manner in which they had conducted relations between themselves and with the Committee.

27. **Mr. Guterres** (Timor-Leste) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Committee for its hard work and dedication, in particular during his country's many years as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. As a member of the Committee, Timor-Leste would work together with the administering Powers and Non-Self-Governing Territories to ensure a productive dialogue leading to the realization of the Territories' aspirations.

28. **Mr. McIvor** (New Zealand) said that it was his sincere hope that New Zealand would not be attending

the next session of the Committee as an administering Power, as it was extremely likely that Tokelau would be delisted within the next year. New Zealand and Tokelau had worked hand in hand to build Tokelau's capacity for self-government in a wide range of areas. He urged the Committee to support appeals for the international community to contribute to the Tokelau Trust Fund in order to assist Tokelau as it progressed beyond self-determination. He also proposed that the Committee should take the lead in the Fourth Committee's discussions of revitalization as it pertained to decolonization.

29. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed organization of its work for the current year.

30. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

31. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would strictly apply the decision of the General Assembly concerning the observance of a quorum, as it had in previous years. In accordance with that decision, the Committee's meetings would be convened without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The presence of a majority of the members would be required, however, when decisions had to be taken.

32. Drawing Committee members' attention to aide-memoire 1/05, he thanked the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for offering to host the 2005 Caribbean Regional Seminar and said that he took it that the Committee wished to accept the offer.

33. *It was so decided.*

34. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia), while expressing his delegation's gratitude to the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, suggested that, whenever possible, the regional seminars should be held in Non-Self-Governing Territories, in order to raise local awareness of pertinent issues. The experience in Anguilla, for example, had been extremely successful.

35. **The Chairman** said that the Committee's normal practice was to make every effort to hold its seminars in Non-Self-Governing Territories. While that had seemed realistic several months earlier, the situation had now changed, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had been the only country to come forward and offer to host the Seminar.

36. He reminded regional groups that they should nominate their representatives to participate in the Seminar, taking into account the established principles of the United Nations, including the principle of rotation. In preparation for the Seminar, he would also hold consultations with a Committee member whose regional group was not represented in the Bureau. He suggested that the Committee should authorize him to hold consultations, as appropriate, on the preparations for the Seminar.

37. *It was so decided.*

38. **The Chairman** said that the delegation of the Bermuda Independence Commission had arrived in New York, and he would be holding informal consultations with its Chairman, Bishop Vernon G. Lambe. Other interested Committee members were invited to attend.

The meeting rose at noon.